



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CHECK'S IN THE MAIL FOR NEW UTAH MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Bennett funds for new dinosaur home on their way to start project

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development today announced its release of approximately \$500,000 secured by Sen. Bob Bennett for planning and development of a new Utah Museum of Natural History at the University of Utah.

Last fall the Congress passed and the president signed legislation including language written by Sen. Bennett for a \$500,000 grant for the new museum. From Bennett's work on the Senate Appropriations Committee, the funds were appropriated through the Economic Development Initiative account of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2001. HUD's disbursement of the grant for \$498,900 will be made immediately.

"We've cleared a significant hurdle today in our efforts to construct this beautiful, new, state-of-the-art facility," Bennett said. "With these funds in the bank and private contributions also committed, the plans can really get underway."

In addition to securing the \$498,900 check issued today, what Bennett has called a federal "down payment," he has also introduced the Utah Public Lands Artifact Preservation Act of 2001 which will authorize up to \$15 million toward the new museum's design and construction.

"The collection of the museum is unique and remarkable. Since a substantial portion of it includes federally-owned treasures from Utah's public lands, which tell the natural and cultural story of the history of the West, it is appropriate that the federal government participate in the responsible preservation of these artifacts," Bennett added.

On announcement of the \$500,000 grant by Bennett last fall, the Emma Eccles Jones Foundation announced its own contribution of up to \$10 million toward the effort and noted that since the federal government will cover only about one-quarter of the project's total cost, private contributions will be necessary for its completion.

The museum's current location, the George Thomas building, was initially constructed in 1932 and served for many years as the university's library. The building's size and configuration restrict what can be displayed from the museum's vast collection, now consisting of over one million items of geological, biological, archaeological, zoological, and paleontological significance. Recognizing the need for a new building, the university has developed a museum master plan and set aside 14 acres in the Emigration Visitors District.

Senator Bennett commended the support of Sen. Hatch who has joined him as a cosponsor of the legislation. He also welcomed Rep. Jim Matheson who joined the effort this year.

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